

Animal Farm

the puppet musical

Study Guide & Educator Materials

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Your Part: The Role of the Audience

Among art forms, the theater is unique in a number of ways. Consider all the differences between static art (painting/photography/sculpture) and performance-based art (dance, theater/music).

What are some of the differences between seeing a show at a movie theater and seeing a show on the stage?

Perhaps the most important difference is the vital role that the audience plays in the theater. It is not only the artists who collaborate to create a valuable and rewarding performance. The audience is part of the show too - without people to share the story with, the performance wouldn't exist!

Movies and television shows are the same whether there is one person watching or ten million. In the live theater, every audience is different, so every performance is different. The audience's reactions affect the performers – that's what makes theater so exciting!

How does a band play differently when the audience is dancing or singing along to the music? How does it affect a comedian's performance when people aren't laughing at his or her jokes?

With all this in mind, be courteous to the actors and your fellow audience members – an audience participating in the wrong ways can be disruptive. But genuine responses to the show are always welcome, and are part of what makes going to the theater one of the best things in the world!

A great audience can help to make an electrifying performance, so get ready to have fun and enjoy yourselves!

About the Author: George Orwell

George Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair in colonial India in 1903, during the heyday of the **British Empire**. Although his mother took Eric and his two sisters back to England for schooling, Eric returned to join the British police force in **Burma** instead of going to college. His experience as a member of an occupying force fostered the **anti-authoritarianism** that would be a cornerstone of his intellectual life. After five years, he resigned in disgust and moved to London to become a writer.

He spent two years living in poverty in London and then in Paris before having several articles published in a **left-wing** journal. In 1933, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, a chronicle of his years in poverty, was published under the **pen name** "George Orwell."

Despite the beginnings of success, Orwell was forced to take a job teaching at a private school to support himself. He married psychology student Eileen O'Shaughnessy and published a novel a year for the next four years. These culminated in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, a study of the working class in Northern England. Originally commissioned as a long essay by the publishing house and political movement The Left Book Club, the experience converted Orwell to **Socialism**, a theory of social and economic equality.

When the Spanish Civil War between **Fascists** and **Marxists** broke out, Orwell and his wife traveled to join the Marxist side, where he witnessed the Fascist faction purge all oppositional groups, including POUM (Workers' Party for Marxist Unification), which Orwell supported. While Orwell was healing from a sniper's bullet on the front lines, the Fascists solidified their control by outlawing POUM, and Orwell and his wife had to escape to France. While the initial egalitarian unity he witnessed at the outbreak of the war remained an inspiration, the later purges left him deeply suspicious of any sort of **totalitarianism**.

Back in Britain, Orwell wrote *Homage to Catalonia*, a factual account of his experiences in Barcelona, and *Coming up for Air*, his account of the financial and social strangulation of the middle class in the years before the Second World War. During the war, he was an Eastern war correspondent until 1943, when he left to become literary editor of the socialist journal *The Tribune*, to begin writing *Animal Farm* and, in 1944, to adopt a son.

Animal Farm, inspired by the **Stalinist purges**, infuriated his publisher and Leftist friends and became one of Britain's most popular books almost immediately following its 1945 publication. Disillusioned by the newly elected **Labour** government and crushed by the death of his wife during an surgery, Orwell moved to the bleak island of Jura off the Scottish coast, where he wrote his foreboding vision of *1984*. Always a sickly man, George Orwell died of tuberculosis in 1950. He was 47.

About the Story: A Synopsis of ANIMAL FARM

Manor Farm is poorly run by the drunken Farmer Jones. Old Major, the farm's ancient boar, gathers the animals together to share his dream with them: a farm without men stealing their labor and then slaughtering them, a farm in which all animals work together as equals to provide for everyone. The next night, Old Major dies in his sleep. The animals hope for revolution while the pigs expand Old Major's ideas into a theory of liberation, "Animalism," which they teach to the other animals.

After the animals are starved for two days while Jones carouses, they break into the food storage and chase Jones off the farm. They rename their home "Animal Farm" and agree on seven basic commandments:

1. Two-legged animals are enemies.
2. Four-legged animals are friends.
3. Animals shall never wear clothes.
4. Animals shall never sleep in beds.
5. Animals shall never drink alcohol
6. Animals shall never kill other animals
7. All animals are equals.

Left to their own devices, the animals run the farm more successfully and produce more food than Farmer Jones ever did. They regularly gather to vote on the future of the farm. Although all are equal, the animals depend on Napoleon and Snowball, the two leading pigs, to make the decisions. Unfortunately, Napoleon and Snowball always oppose each other. Between meetings, smaller decisions, like the pigs' decision to hoard all the milk for themselves, are explained by Squealer, a long-winded pig who assures them that all the pigs' decisions are made to prevent the return of Farmer Jones.

Meanwhile, Farmer Jones convinces the other farmers that the only way to prevent a similar revolution on their farms is to help him take back his. A group of men attack the animals, only to be repulsed by Snowball's clever defense plan and brave attack, and he is awarded a medal for his valor. Not everyone is happy with the new Animalist order, however. Mollie, a vain and pampered horse, misses the lavish attention and pretty hair ribbons that humans used to provide her. After being caught allowing a neighboring farmer to stroke her nose, Mollie runs away from the farm. The other animals never mention her again.

The conflicts between Napoleon and Snowball escalate, and eventually erupt over Snowball's plan to build a windmill to provide electricity to the farm. Snowball convinces the animals to vote with him, but Napoleon, who opposes the plan, calls in a pack of savage dogs he has been raising in secret. The dogs chase Snowball from the farm. Squealer explains to the frightened animals that Snowball was really a traitor who wanted to replace Farmer Jones as the head of the farm. He also explains that in order to keep the farm safer, Napoleon will reluctantly assume the heavy responsibilities of

leadership. One of his first acts is to build the windmill, which Squealer explains was an idea stolen by Snowball from Napoleon's papers.

The animals work furiously on the windmill, but need outside materials to complete it. Napoleon announces a plan to trade their crops with neighboring farms to buy materials, leaving the animals without enough to eat. Meanwhile, the pigs move into Jones's house and sleep on beds, telling the illiterate animals that the prohibition was actually against man-made sheets, not the beds themselves. When the food supplies are depleted, Squealer blames Snowball, who he says has been secretly working to undermine the farm from the beginning. Napoleon calls a meeting in which several nervous animals confess to helping Snowball. Napoleon's vicious dogs kill the confessed traitors, and he declares himself president of the Republic of Animal Farm.

When the windmill is finally finished, largely through the tremendous exertion of the loyal workhorse Boxer, the pigs celebrate by getting drunk, but their excitement is cut short when a group of humans sneak into Animal Farm and destroy the new windmill. In the face of the animals' despair, Napoleon tells them to rejoice that they can rebuild the windmill, because their enemy, Snowball, has been killed. While the animals are celebrating, Boxer collapses. Squealer tells them Boxer must be taken to the veterinarian, but when the van arrives, its sign reads "Horse Slaughterer." Squealer later promises the animals that the veterinarian's van had only been bought from a slaughterer and that Boxer died nobly, whispering the words "Napoleon is always right."

As the years pass, the pigs continue to trade with other farms and rent out the windmill for grinding corn instead of electricity, as in the original plan. They eventually learn to walk on two legs and replace the seven commandments of Animal Farm with a single rule: "All Animals are Equal. But some are more equal than others." Finally, the pigs entertain a party of men in the old farmhouse. They drink, toast each other's success, and forge an alliance. And as the animals look in from the windows, they can't tell the pigs from the men.

Pre-Show Questions (for younger students)

- 1) George Orwell calls ANIMAL FARM “a fairy story.” What are some fairy stories that you know? What happens to the characters in other fairy stories you know?
- 2) Lots of fairy tales have “good” and “evil” characters. How do you know if a person is good? How do you know if a person is evil?
- 3) In ANIMAL FARM, the barnyard animals get rid of the human farmer who was being mean to them, and then they try to run the farm by themselves. Were they successful? What happened? What could they have done better?
- 4) What is “equality?” Do you think that all the animals on the farm are equal? Do you think that all people in the world are equal? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 5) What role does education play in ANIMAL FARM? Who knows how to read and write? Who doesn’t? What relation does this have to who controls the farm?
- 6) Is there a lesson or “moral” to be learned from what happens to the animals?
- 7) What do you think will happen to Animal Farm? Will the pigs and humans continue to run the farm together? Will there be another animal rebellion?

Pre-Show Questions (for older students)

- 1) George Orwell calls ANIMAL FARM “a fairy story.” Why do you think he did this? Some fairy tales have a “lesson” or “moral.” Does ANIMAL FARM have a “moral?”
- 2) Many of the characters in ANIMAL FARM have carefully-chosen and meaningful names. Pick two or three of the characters, and discuss what those names might mean, and how they fit the characters.
- 3) Imagine you are one of the characters of ANIMAL FARM. What, if anything, would you try to do differently next time?
- 4) How do the pigs establish and then maintain control over the farm? What tactics do they use?
- 5) You probably know who the President of the United States is, but do you know who serves as your Senators and Representatives from your area? Do you know who makes the decisions for your city or town? If you don’t know, then find out, using newspapers, the Internet, or other sources. What areas of your life do politicians’ decisions influence, and what choices have they recently made on your behalf? Why is it important to know these things? And how does this connect to the events of ANIMAL FARM?
- 6) George Orwell wrote ANIMAL FARM in response to particular political events during his life. Do a little research to find out what those events were. How does this information help your understanding of the story?
- 7) Look up the meanings of the words “Socialism,” “Totalitarianism,” “Authoritarianism,” “Stalinism,” and “Propaganda.” How do these political ideas relate to ANIMAL FARM?

Pre-Show Activities

(also available as part of residency activities)

- 1) ***Theater Design*** In the theater, actors, designers and directors use sound, music, lights, costumes and scenery to tell the story. If you were telling the story of ANIMAL FARM to a big theater audience, how would you do it? How would you make an actor look like a horse or a cow or a pig? In small groups, assign students who will be in charge of costumes, sound effects, lights and scenery. Costume designers: choose at least five characters and describe what costumes they would wear (drawings optional). If they had to wear clothes, what clothes would they wear (hats, gloves, shoes, shirts, jackets, pants)? Sound designers: choose the five most important moments in the story that require sound effects and describe them in detail (emphasize variety!). Lighting designers: choose five different important scenes and describe what the lights would look like (colors, brightness, any spotlight? Any emotional content that can be achieved with light direction?). Scenic designers: decide what the backdrop would look like, and how to establish different parts of the farm – i.e. the windmill, the barn, the farmhouse (drawings optional). Then, each group gives a presentation to the rest of the class. You'll be amazed by how different the designs will be!
- 2) ***Playwriting and Directing*** (For small groups) Each group chooses their favorite scene from the story, and assigns a role to each participant (only one narrator allowed per group). Then, passing a single sheet of paper around the group from actor to actor as their character chooses to speak, write a short 2-3 page script (about 25 minutes). Then rehearse the scene and perform it for the rest of the class.
- 3) ***Acting and Character*** Each student chooses a character from ANIMAL FARM that they would like to work on. First, he or she fills out the attached "Character Questionnaire." Then, each student writes a half-page monologue that introduces their character and expresses his or her deepest hopes, dreams and frustrations. It could be a speech, a love letter, a petition, a journal entry or a letter to the Editor of the local newspaper. Next, each student decides how the character will speak and move and talk. Does the animal have a high-pitched or deep voice? Do they speak quickly and nervously or with confidence? Each student then memorizes their monologue and performs it for the class. If the students focus exclusively on the task of bringing the character to life for their classmates, and sharing the animal's story, then this exercise can be a huge success.

Questions to Consider After the Show

- 1) *Of all animals to choose, why do you think that the Director and Designers of ANIMAL FARM (the Puppet Musical) chose a rat to be the Narrator of the story?*
- 2) *One of the original Seven Commandments of Animalism was that “Animals shall never wear clothes.” How did the costume design and the puppets work together to make the animal characters seem believable and real, and still let the actors wear clothes?*
- 3) *Even though most of the puppets never move their mouths (the only puppet with movable mouth are the Rat and Old Major), did you believe them? Why or why not?*
- 4) *Did you like the music? What was your favorite song? Why?*
- 5) *Discuss the casting choices and the performances. How did each performance/ characterization match up to your expectations?*
- 6) *Where and when do you think the story took place? What country? What year? If you think it seemed like America, then where in America? What clues did the designers give you (costumes, set, sound effects)?*
- 7) *What parts of the book did the stage adaptation leave out?*
- 8) *Review pre-show questions.*

Post-Show Activities

Creative Writing

- 1. What do you think happens to the animals after the end of the story? Answer this question by writing a new final chapter as an epilogue. For an added challenge, try writing this final chapter in the style of Orwell's novel.*
- 2. If you had a chance to talk to the animals and warn them about their future, what would you say? What helpful advice would you offer? Write a letter in three paragraphs.*

Visual Art

- 1. Draw a full-color map of the farm – make sure to include the farmhouse, the windmill, the neighboring farm, the barn, and the cliff. Add in other features as you like (streams, forests, hills, crop fields, pastures) – have fun with it!*
- 2. Draw Snowball's battle plan/diagram for the Battle of the Cowshed.*
- 3. Choose a character from the story and create a collage using newspaper and magazine clippings that represent the character's personality traits. Once completed, share your collage with others who chose the same character. How do your collages differ? How are they alike?*

Civics

- 1. Research:** The animals of ANIMAL FARM try to create a perfect society where equality is the law. Throughout history, many democratic societies have attempted to do the same, with differing results. In small groups, research the structure of government in different “democratic” or “socialist” civilizations – Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, post-Revolution and Napoleonic France, 20th Century Russia and others. What led to their decline/downfall? Are there any parallels with America today?*
- 2. Group Discussion:** The pigs are elected to be the leaders of the farm, but eventually they start making decisions that lead to the unhappiness of the other animals. Do you trust politicians? What do they do to earn our trust? What do they do to keep our trust? What happens when they betray our trust? All the animals seemed to be able to do was watch. As Americans, what recourse do we have when we feel that our leaders aren't representing our interests?*
- 3. Role-Playing:** Divide the class into groups of seven or eight. Assign each student with a role: Boxer, Clover, Benjamin, Snowball, Squealer, Napoleon, Mollie, Jones, Sheep/chickens/cows. Each group debates a different topic – whether to build the windmill, whether to expel Mollie from the farm, issues of farm security, whether to trade with humans. If the characters begin to argue, (as the animals!) create rules of order for their meeting – who gets to speak when and for how long, etc...*

Further Reading

The sources below—only a few recent examples of what is available—will help provide you with additional information on George Orwell and his works.

At the Library:

Boerst, William J. *Generous Anger: The Story of George Orwell*. Greensboro, NC: Morgan Reynolds, 2001.

Mitzi Brunsdale. *Student Companion to George Orwell*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Calder, Jenni. *Animal Farm and 1984*. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1987.

Hammond, John R. *A George Orwell Chronology*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.

Hitchens, Christopher. *Why Orwell Matters*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

On the Web:

<http://www.k-1.com/Orwell/> includes biographical information, essays, criticism and pictures of Orwell's work.

<http://www.abattoir.com/~prime8/Orwell/> allows access to many of Orwell's political essays.

<http://www.online-literature.com/orwell/animalfarm/> offers a searchable online version of the text of ANIMAL FARM

<http://dewey.chs.chico.k12.ca.us/orwell.html/> gives background information on Orwell, propaganda techniques and the Russian Revolution

www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/anfrm/anfrmtg.html/ offers additional ideas for activities related to the themes of ANIMAL FARM

Broadening the impact of ANIMAL FARM: *Artist workshops and residencies*

Synapse’s artist residencies can be tailored to fit your goals. Each of the workshops listed below can be any duration, from one 60-minute class period to a five-day workshop. The longer the collaboration, the more our talented and experienced teaching artists can help your students learn and achieve!

Please plan for one teaching artist for every 16 students.

“The Power of the Puppet”

Synapse’s production of ANIMAL FARM features astonishing full body puppetry that encompasses many classical forms of puppet-making, from “stick-and-rod” to Bunraku. Providing a wonderful introduction to puppet performance and design, our teaching artists spark students’ imaginations by enabling them to discover puppetry’s full range of creative possibility. Using stuffed animals, articles of clothing, desk lamps, fans, hairdryers and other everyday items, students will learn about different forms of puppetry, and then learn how to breathe life and personality into inanimate objects.

ALL AGES – effective both pre- and post-performance.

“The Magic of Storytelling”

In Synapse’s production of ANIMAL FARM, a very special narrator relates the story to the audience: a three-foot tall talking rat. Witty and engaging, the Rat shares his story as if it has been handed down to him by generations of barnyard troublemakers, in the tradition of Templeton from E.B.White’s *Charlotte’s Web*.

Storytelling is one of the oldest art forms in the world. Before written language evolved, humans passed down stories of expeditions, battles, and adventures through the “Oral Tradition.” In this popular workshop, Synapse’s teaching artists lead classroom teachers and students through a series of fun activities and games exploring the dynamics of storytelling, awakening the imagination and the joy of storytelling in everyone.

ALL AGES – effective both pre- and post-performance.

“Animal Farm and YOU – The Value of Civic Participation”

Whether we like it or not, every democracy throughout human history has been plagued by the challenges that confront the animals of ANIMAL FARM. Who are the leaders, and how do they make decisions? How much power do they have? The success of any democratic society depends on the willingness of the people to participate by staying informed of the issues that shape their lives and then communicating their wishes and opinions to an open-minded and flexible governing body.

Taking the events of ANIMAL FARM as a jumping-off point, this innovative workshop leads students through a series of exercises designed to awaken students’ awareness of their role in the political decisions that shape our lives as Americans, asking such questions as “What is a politician?” “Why is it important to vote?” and “Where do I fit in?”

ALL AGES – generally more effective post-performance.